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HD **Environment minister Catherine McKenna says pipeline fight puts national climate plan in peril; She is pleading for a truce in the dispute between the B.C. and Alberta provincial governments**
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VICTORIA --

Federal Environment Minister Catherine McKenna, faced with the threat of a growing number of Canadian provinces balking at her government's climate action plan, is pleading for a truce in the pipeline dispute between the B.C. and Alberta governments.

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Continued support for Kinder Morgan Canada Inc.'s pipeline-expansion project was the trade-off Ottawa made to bring the Alberta NDP government on board for a national price on carbon.

Now, with B.C.'s NDP government seeking to block the pipeline, Ms. McKenna sees the potential for Alberta's crucial support unravelling.

"We are now in a situation where we have two progressive governments, NDP governments, who believe in climate change ... and we could lose our climate plan because you have other politicians who are waiting in the wings who don't believe in climate change, who don't believe in climate action, who want to reverse all these policies," she said. "And that's not just in one province, that's in a number of provinces."

Ontario's new Progressive Conservative Leader, Doug Ford, has said getting rid of a cap-and-trade program for carbon emissions will be a central part of his party's platform for the provincial election on June 7.

Alberta Opposition leader Jason Kenney has vowed to dismantle the provincial carbon tax if his United Conservative Party wins the provincial election that must be called by May 31, 2019.

Under the terms of the Pan-Canadian Framework on Clean Growth and Climate Change, the federal Liberal government has declared that it will impose a carbon tax on any province that does not put a minimum price on carbon by next January.

Saskatchewan is already holding out, but Alberta's support was crucial. Alberta accounted for 38 per cent of Canada's greenhouse gas emissions in 2015 - the most recent figures available. That is the highest of any province. Under Alberta's emissions plan, GHG production will continue to rise, but the Alberta NDP under Premier Rachel Notley has agreed to cap emissions growth.

Ms. McKenna said she is meeting with her counterparts in Alberta and B.C. to try to “bring folks together.”

The Alberta government temporarily imposed a ban on B.C. wines in retaliation for B.C.’s actions to block construction of Kinder Morgan’s Trans Mountain expansion project. Although the trade tiff has been shelved for now, Alberta says Ottawa must ensure its oil can reach the B.C. coast, and overseas markets.

British Columbia is asking the courts to determine if it has the authority to limit oil transport within the province. The B.C. NDP government under Premier John Horgan wants to stop the Kinder Morgan expansion project, saying the increased movement of oil poses too great a risk to coastal waters.

Ms. McKenna, in an interview in Victoria, insisted that tripling the capacity of the Trans Mountain pipeline “is not inconsistent” with the national climate action plan.

George Heyman, B.C.’s Minister of Environment, said he rejects the accusation that his government’s actions on Kinder Morgan are undermining climate action.

“We have embraced the federal plan, in fact, British Columbia will be one year ahead of the federal targets,” he said. “We are prepared to do our share.”

Canada was among the countries that signed the 2015 Paris accord, pledging to set national targets to cut greenhouse gas emissions. But a report from Ms. McKenna’s department in December acknowledged that the gap between Canada’s targets and its plans to reduce emissions is widening.

Ms. McKenna would not say how Canada will close the gap, and blamed economic growth for the lack of progress. “The good news is, our economy grew, and the bad news is, it has an impact on projections,” she said. “We are in a transition and we need to figure out the way forward, and we need to be working together. ... But the first thing we need to do is make sure we are implementing our current plan.”

That plan calls on the provinces and territories to impose at least a \$10-per-tonne carbon price this year, rising to \$50 a tonne by 2022. Any province that does not would have a federal price imposed on it.

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